



Preschool Meal Pattern Training for the School Nutrition Programs

Module 2: Introduction to Preschool Meal Patterns

Connecticut State Department of Education
Bureau of Child Nutrition Programs
School Year 2023-24
December 2023

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Preschool Meal Pattern Training Modules

1. Introduction to Training
2. Introduction to Preschool Meal Patterns
3. Comparison of Meal Patterns for Preschool and Grades K-5
4. Milk Component
5. Meat/Meat Alternates Component
6. Fruits Component and Vegetables Component
7. Grains Component
8. Meal Service for Preschoolers

<https://portal.ct.gov/SDE/Nutrition/Meal-Patterns-Preschoolers-in-School-Nutrition-Programs/How-To>

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Module Topics

- Meal pattern legislation
- Food-based menu planning
- Meal pattern requirements
- Co-mingled meal service
- USDA's Best Practices
- Resources



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Preschool Meal Pattern Legislation


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Preschool Meal Pattern Legislation

- Same as meal patterns for children in the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP)
- Effective October 1, 2017
 - Final Rule: CACFP Meal Pattern Revisions Related to the Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act of 2010
 - Updated CACFP and preschool meal patterns to be more consistent with Dietary Guidelines for Americans

<https://www.fns.usda.gov/cacfp/fr-042516>




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USDA Regulations for the Preschool Meal Patterns

- Breakfast: 7 CFR 220.8(o)
- Lunch: 7 CFR 210.10(p)
- Snack: 7 CFR 210.10(o)(3)

<https://www.ecfr.gov/current/title-7/subtitle-B/chapter-II/subchapter-A/part-220>
<https://www.ecfr.gov/current/title-7/subtitle-B/chapter-II/subchapter-A/part-210>




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Implementation Guidance

- USDA policy memos
- CSDE operational memoranda



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USDA Webpage

Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) Documents & Resources

- USDA policy memos
- Final rules
- Educational materials
- Resources and websites




<https://www.fns.usda.gov/resources>

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CSDE Webpage

Operational Memoranda for School Nutrition Programs



<https://portal.ct.gov/SDE/Lists/Operational-Memoranda-for-School-Nutrition-Programs>

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CSDE Webpage

Laws and Regulations for Child Nutrition Programs



<https://portal.ct.gov/SDE/Nutrition/Laws-and-Regulations-for-Child-Nutrition-Programs>

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Overview of Food-based Menu Planning




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Food-based Menu Planning

- Three requirements for reimbursable meals and snacks
 1. Food components
 2. Minimum portions based on specific age groups
 3. Restrictions or nutrition standards for certain foods

Preschool menus must meet all three



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Meal Pattern Requirement #1: Food Components

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Food Components

The five food groups that comprise reimbursable meals in the NSLP and SBP

Meat/meat alternates (MMA)	Vegetables
Grains	Fruits
	Milk

Terms to Know

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Meal Pattern Requirement #2: Minimum Portions

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Minimum Preschool Portions

- Planned to meet average calorie and nutrient needs for two different age groups
 - Ages 1-2
 - Ages 3-4
- SFAs may serve more than minimum portion of any component




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Preschool Age Group Considerations

- Child's age is older or younger than meal pattern age/grade
 - If 5-year-old in preschool, preschool meal patterns apply
 - If 4-year-old is in Kindergarten, appropriate meal pattern for school's grade grouping applies




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Examples: 4-year-old in Kindergarten

Meal pattern	Allowable grade groups
Breakfast	K-5 K-8 K-12
Lunch	K-5 K-8
Snack	K-12




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Preschool Age Group Considerations

- During co-mingled meals, SFA may use meal pattern of the older grade group for preschoolers



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Meal Pattern Requirement #3: Nutrition Restrictions




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Nutrition Restrictions

Restrict	Prohibit
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sugar limits for breakfast cereals and yogurt Juice limit 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Grain-based desserts Flavored milk Flavored nondairy milk substitutes Deep-fat frying on site




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Food-based Meal Patterns

- Food components
- Portions based on specific age groups
- Nutrition restrictions

= reimbursable meals and snacks



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Preschool Meal Patterns



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Preschool Breakfast Meal Pattern


3 components	Minimum quantities		Considerations for Grains
	Ages 1-2	Ages 3-4	
Grains 	½ oz eq	½ oz eq	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No grain-based desserts Recommended limit for sweet crackers: ≤ 2 times per week Sugar limit for breakfast cereals: ≤ 6 grams/ounce ≥ 1 WGR serving per day MMA substitute for entire grains component ≤ 3 times per week
Vegetables 	¼ cup	¼ cup	
Fruits 	¼ cup	¼ cup	
Milk 	¼ cup	¼ cup	

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Examples of MMA Substitutions at Breakfast

- ½ ounce MMA = ½ oz eq grains
 - ½ ounce cheese
 - ¼ large egg
 - ¼ cup yogurt
 - 1 tablespoon peanut butter



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USDA Webpage

Serving Meat and Meat Alternates at Breakfast

Handouts, training slides, and webinars in English and Spanish







<https://www.fns.usda.gov/tn/serving-meats-and-meat-alternates-breakfast-cacfp>

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Preschool Breakfast Meal Pattern

3 components	Minimum quantities		Considerations for Grains
	Ages 1-2	Ages 3-4	
Grains 	½ oz eq	½ oz eq	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ No grain-based desserts ▪ Recommended limit for sweet crackers: ≤ 2 times per week ▪ Sugar limit for breakfast cereals: ≤ 6 grams/ounce ▪ ≥ 1 WGR serving per day ▪ MMA substitute for entire grains component ≤ 3 times per week
Vegetables 	¼ cup	¼ cup	
Fruits 			
Milk 	¼ cup	¼ cup	

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Preschool Breakfast Meal Pattern

3 components	Minimum quantities		Considerations for Vegetables/Fruits
	Ages 1-2	Ages 3-4	
Grains 	½ oz eq	½ oz eq	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Juice limit: once per day
Vegetables 	¼ cup	¼ cup	
Fruits 			
Milk 	¼ cup	¼ cup	

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Preschool Breakfast Meal Pattern

3 components	Minimum quantities		Considerations for Milk
	Ages 1-2	Ages 3-4	
Grains 	½ oz eq	½ oz eq	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Must be unflavored ▪ Fat content <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Age 1: whole milk • Ages 2-4: low-fat or fat-free milk ▪ Appropriate fat content when serving ages 1-4 together
Vegetables 	¼ cup	¼ cup	
Fruits 			
Milk 	¼ cup	¼ cup	

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Preschool Lunch Meal Pattern

5 components	Minimum quantities		Considerations for MMA
	Ages 1-2	Ages 3-4	
MMA 	1 ounce	1½ ounces	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Ages 3-4 require larger serving than grades K-5 ▪ Must be main dish or main dish and 1 food item ▪ Nuts and seeds ≤ 50% ▪ Consider children's developmental readiness
Grains 	½ oz eq	½ oz eq	
Vegetables 	¼ cup	¼ cup	
Fruits 	¼ cup	¼ cup	
Milk 	¼ cup	¼ cup	

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Preschool Lunch Meal Pattern

5 components	Minimum quantities		Considerations for Grains
	Ages 1-2	Ages 3-4	
MMA 	1 ounce	1½ ounces	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No grain-based desserts Recommended limit for sweet crackers: ≤ 2 times per week for all meals/snacks Sugar limit for breakfast cereals: ≤ 6 grams/ounce ≥ 1 WGR serving per day
Grains 	¼ oz eq	¼ oz eq	
Vegetables 	¼ cup	¼ cup	
Fruits 	¼ cup	¼ cup	
Milk 	½ cup	¾ cup	

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Preschool Lunch Meal Pattern

5 components	Minimum quantities		Considerations for Vegetables
	Ages 1-2	Ages 3-4	
MMA 	1 ounce	1½ ounces	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No vegetable subgroups
Grains 	¼ oz eq	¼ oz eq	
Vegetables 	¼ cup	¼ cup	
Fruits 	¼ cup	¼ cup	
Milk 	½ cup	¾ cup	

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Preschool Lunch Meal Pattern

5 components	Minimum quantities		Considerations for Fruits
	Ages 1-2	Ages 3-4	
MMA 	1 ounce	1½ ounces	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Vegetables may substitute for fruits <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 2 different kinds 
Grains 	¼ oz eq	¼ oz eq	
Vegetables 	¼ cup	¼ cup	
Fruits 	¼ cup	¼ cup	
Milk 	½ cup	¾ cup	

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Preschool Lunch Meal Pattern

5 components	Minimum quantities		Considerations for Vegetables and Fruits
	Ages 1-2	Ages 3-4	
MMA 	1 ounce	1½ ounces	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Juice limit: once per day
Grains 	¼ oz eq	¼ oz eq	
Vegetables 	¼ cup	¼ cup	
Fruits 	¼ cup	¼ cup	
Milk 	½ cup	¾ cup	

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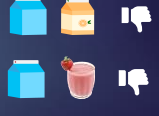




Preschool Lunch Meal Pattern

5 components	Minimum quantities		Considerations for Milk
	Ages 1-2	Ages 3-4	
MMA 	1 ounce	1½ ounces	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Must be unflavored Fat content <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Age 1: whole milk Ages 2-4: low-fat or fat-free milk Appropriate fat content when serving ages 1-4 together
Grains 	¼ oz eq	¼ oz eq	
Vegetables 	¼ cup	¼ cup	
Fruits 	¼ cup	¼ cup	
Milk 	½ cup	¾ cup	

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Preschool Snack Meal Pattern

Serve any 2 components	Minimum quantities		Only 1 component may be a creditable beverage
	Ages 1-2	Ages 3-4	
MMA 	½ ounce	½ ounce	
Grains 	¼ oz eq	¼ oz eq	
Vegetables 	¼ cup	¼ cup	
Fruits 	¼ cup	¼ cup	
Milk 	¼ cup	¼ cup	

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Preschool Snack Meal Pattern






Serve any 2 components	Minimum quantities	
	Ages 1-2	Ages 3-4
MMA 	½ ounce	½ ounce
Grains 	¼ oz eq	¼ oz eq
Vegetables 	¼ cup	¼ cup
Fruits 	¼ cup	¼ cup
Milk 	¼ cup	¼ cup

- Same servings for each age group

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Preschool Snack Meal Pattern

Serve any 2 components	Minimum quantities		Considerations for Grains
	Ages 1-2	Ages 3-4	
MMA 	½ ounce	½ ounce	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No grain-based desserts Recommended limit for sweet crackers: ≤ 2 times per week for all meals/snacks Sugar limit for breakfast cereals: ≤ 6 grams/ounce ≥ 1 WGR serving per day
Grains 	¼ oz eq	¼ oz eq	
Vegetables 	¼ cup	¼ cup	
Fruits 	¼ cup	¼ cup	
Milk 	¼ cup	¼ cup	

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Preschool Snack Meal Pattern

Serve any 2 components	Minimum quantities		Considerations for Vegetables and Fruits
	Ages 1-2	Ages 3-4	
MMA 	½ ounce	½ ounce	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Best Practice: ≥ 1 component is vegetable or fruit Juice limit: once per day
Grains 	¼ oz eq	¼ oz eq	
Vegetables 	¼ cup	¼ cup	
Fruits 	¼ cup	¼ cup	
Milk 	¼ cup	¼ cup	

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Preschool Snack Meal Pattern


Serve any 2 components	Minimum quantities		Considerations for Milk
	Ages 1-2	Ages 3-4	
MMA 	½ ounce	½ ounce	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Must be unflavored Fat content <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Age 1: whole milk Ages 2-4: low-fat or fat-free milk Appropriate fat content when serving ages 1-4 together
Grains 	¼ oz eq	¼ oz eq	
Vegetables 	¼ cup	¼ cup	
Fruits 	¼ cup	¼ cup	
Milk 	¼ cup	¼ cup	

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Additional Requirement for Snack Menus in Healthy Food Certification (HFC) Public Schools

- Applies to HFC schools only
- ASP snacks must comply with Connecticut Nutrition Standards (CNS)



https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/SDE/Nutrition/HFC/Data/HFC_schools.pdf

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Connecticut Nutrition Standards



<https://portal.ct.gov/SDE/Nutrition/Connecticut-Nutrition-Standards>

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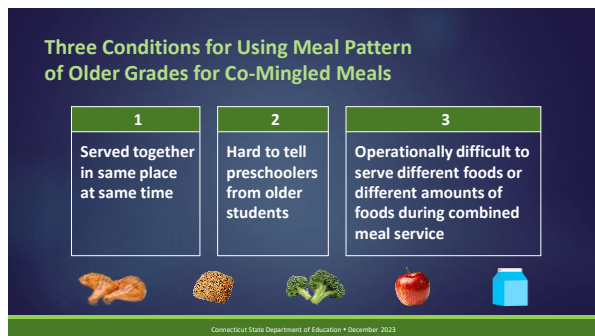
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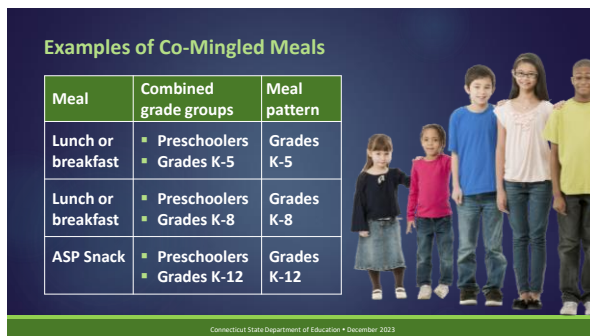
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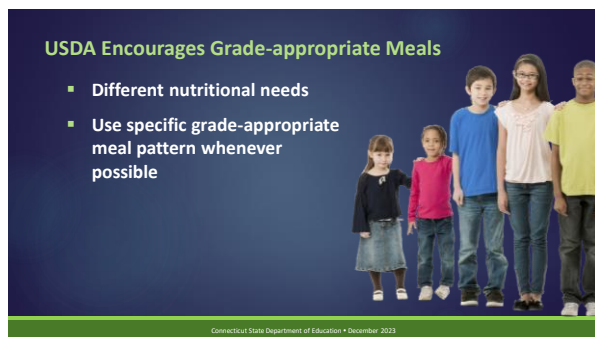
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How Meal Pattern of Older Grades Applies to Co-Mingled Meals

- Weekly requirements include
 - Dietary specifications
 - ≥ 80% WGR grains
 - Juice limits
 - Vegetable subgroups at lunch



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How Meal Pattern of Older Grades Applies to Co-Mingled Meals

- Must offer milk variety
 - Flavored milk allowed



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How Meal Pattern of Older Grades Applies to Co-Mingled Meals

- If implement offer versus serve (OVS) for older grades at breakfast and lunch, OVS also applies to preschoolers

Not allowed for preschoolers without co-mingling

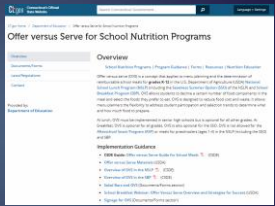


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Offer versus Serve for School Nutrition Programs




<https://portal.ct.gov/SDE/Nutrition/Offer-versus-Serve-for-School-Nutrition-Programs>

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Meal Patterns for Grades K-12 in School Nutrition Programs



<https://portal.ct.gov/SDE/Nutrition/Meal-Patterns-School-Nutrition-Programs/Documents>

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More Meal Pattern Information




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Reasons to Avoid Co-mingled Meals

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Reasons to Avoid Co-mingled Meals

- Closer supervision of younger children
- Family-style meal service is best option
- May affect amount preschoolers eat
- Preschool meal patterns provide amounts and types of foods for best nutrition




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How to Avoid Co-mingled Meals

- Offer breakfast and lunch in classroom
- Stagger meal service times
- Serve meals family style




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Knowledge Check: Co-mingled Meal Service

- Decide if each type of meal service is co-mingled



https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/SDE/Nutrition/Training/Preschool/Preschool_Meal_Pattern_Worksheet_Module_2_Comingled_Meals.pdf

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Co-mingled meals?

1. Preschoolers are mixed together with grades K-5 at lunch and both grade groups go through the serving line together

Yes No

May use K-5 lunch meal pattern for both groups



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Co-mingled meals?

2. Preschoolers and grades K-8 arrive at school at the same time and enter the cafeteria serving line together to get breakfast

Yes No

May use K-8 breakfast meal pattern for both groups



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Co-mingled meals?

3. Preschoolers and grades K-8 are served ASP snack in the same service area at the same time

Yes No

May use K-12 snack meal pattern for both groups



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Co-mingled meals?

4. Preschoolers and students in grades K-5 eat together during the same meal period but one serving line is used for preschoolers and another serving line is used for grades K-5

Yes No

Must use preschool meal pattern and K-5 meal pattern



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Co-mingled meals?

5. A school with preschoolers and grades K-8 offers a bagged grab-and-go breakfast from one location that is available to students at the beginning of the school day

Yes No

May use K-8 breakfast meal pattern for both groups



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Co-mingled meals?

6. At lunch, the preschool class eats immediately after the older grade groups and food service staff do not have time to switch serving utensils or change food items, such as removing flavored milk

Yes No

May use older grades' lunch meal pattern for both groups



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Co-mingled meals?

7. Preschoolers eat breakfast in the classroom

Yes No

Must use preschool meal pattern



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Reminder: When Preschool Meal Patterns Apply



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When Preschool Meal Patterns Apply

- Meals/snacks served to preschoolers in different area/time from older grades
 - Separate cafeteria serving line
 - Separate meal service time
 - Classroom meals

Provides best nutrition for preschoolers



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USDA Best Practices for Preschool Meals



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USDA Best Practices for Preschool Meals

- Improve nutritional quality of preschool meals and snacks




https://ms-prod.azureedge.us/sites/default/files/cacfp_factBP.pdf

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Best Practices for Vegetables and Fruits

- Serve a vegetable or fruit for at least one of the two required snack components
- Serve whole fruits (fresh, frozen, canned, and dried) more often than juice
 - Cut fresh fruits into appropriate size
- Provide at least one serving of each vegetable subgroup each week



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Best Practices for Grains

- ≥ 2 servings of WGR grains per day




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Best Practices for MMA

- Serve only lean meats, nuts, and legumes
- Limit processed meats to 1 serving per week
- Choose foods lower in saturated fat



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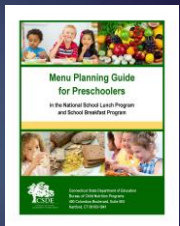
Meal Pattern Resources

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CSDE Resource

Menu Planning Guide for Preschoolers in the National School Lunch Program and School Breakfast Program



https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/SDE/Nutrition/NSLP/Preschool/Menu_Planning_Guide_Preschool.pdf

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Meal Patterns for Preschoolers in School Nutrition Programs



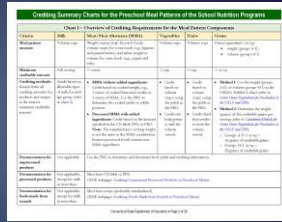
<https://portal.ct.gov/SDE/Nutrition/Meal-Patterns-Preschoolers-in-School-Nutrition-Programs>

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CSDE Resource

Crediting Summary Charts for the Preschool Meal Patterns of the School Nutrition Programs



https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/SDE/Nutrition/NSLP/Crediting/Crediting_Summary_Charts_SNP_Preschool.pdf

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USDA Resource

Serving School Meals to Preschoolers

English and Spanish




<https://www.fns.usda.gov/tn/serving-school-meals-preschoolers>

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USDA Resource

CACFP Meal Pattern Training Slides



<https://www.fns.usda.gov/tn/meal-pattern-training-slides-cacfp>


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CSDE Resource


Resources for the Preschool Meal Patterns



https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/SDE/Nutrition/NSLP/Preschool/Resources_Preschool_Meal_Patterns.pdf

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Questions?

Contact the school nutrition programs staff

<https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/SDE/Nutrition/CNstaff/countyassgn.pdf>

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Thank you for participating!

<https://portal.ct.gov/SDE/Nutrition/Meal-Patterns-Preschoolers-in-School-Nutrition-Programs>

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1. mail: U.S. Department of Agriculture
Office of the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights
1400 Independence Avenue, SW
Washington, D.C. 20250-9410; or
2. fax: (833) 256-1665 or (202) 690-7442; or
3. email: program.intake@usda.gov

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